

Eleonora: 17

A PANEGYRICAL
POEM:
Dedicated to the
MEMORY
Of the Late
COUNTESS
O.F
ABINGDON.

Written by Mr. D R Y D E N.

Superas evadere ad auris,
Hoc opus, hic labor est. Pauci, quos æquus amavit
Juppiter, aut ardens evexit ad æthera virtus;
Diis geniti potuere. Virgil Aeneid. I. 6.

L O N D O N :

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE
Earl of Abingdon, &c.

MY LORD,

THE Commands, with which You honour'd me some Months ago, are now perform'd; They had been sooner; but betwixt ill health, some business, and many troubles, I was forc'd to deferr them till this time. Ovid, going to his Banishment, and Writing from on Shipboard to his Friends, excus'd the Faults of his Poetry by his Misfortunes; and told them, that good Verses never flow, but from a serene and compos'd Spirit. Wit, which is a kind of Mercury, with Wings fasten'd to his Head and Heels, can flye but slowly, in a damp air. I therefore chose rather to Obey You late, than ill: if at least I am capable of writing any thing, at any time, which is worthy Your Person and Your Patronage. I cannot say that I have escap'd from a Shipwreck; but have only gain'd a Rock by hard swimming; where I may pant a while and gather breath: For the Doctors give me a sad assurance, that my Disease never took its leave of any man, but with a purpose to return. However, my Lord, I have laid hold on the In-

The Dedication.

terval, and menag'd the small Stock which Age has left me, to the best advantage, in performing this inconsiderable service to my Ladies Memory. We, who are Priests of Apollo, have not the Inspiration when we please; but must wait till the God comes rushing on us, and invades us with a fury, which we are not able to resist: which gives us double strength while the Fit continues, and leaves us languishing and spent, at its departure. Let me not seem to boast, my Lord; for I have really felt it on this Occasion; and prophecy'd beyond my natural power. Let me add, and hope to be believ'd, that the Excellency of the Subject contributed much to the Happiness of the Execution: And that the weight of thirty Tears was taken off me, while I was writing. I swam with the Tyde, and the Water under me was buoyant. The Reader will easily observe, that I was transported, by the multitude and variety of my Similitudes; which are generally the product of a luxuriant Fancy; and the wantonness of Wit. Had I call'd in my Judgment to my assistance, I had certainly retrench'd many of them. But I defend them not; let them pass for beautiful faults amongst the better sort of Critiques: For the whole Poem, though written in that which they call Heroique Verse, is of the Pindarique nature, as well in the Thought as the Expression; and as such, requires the same grains of allowance for it. It was intended, as Your Lordship sees in the Title, not for an Elegie; but a Panegyrique. A kind of Apotheosis, indeed; if a Heathen Word may be applyed to a Christian use. And on all Occasions of Praise, if we take the Ancients for our Patterns, we are bound by Prescription to employ the magnificence of Words, and the force of Figures, to adorn the sublimity of Thoughts. Isocrates amongst the Grecian

Orators,

Orators; and Cicero, and the younger Pliny, amongst the Romans, have left us their Precedents for our security: For I think I need not mention the inimitable Pindar, who stretches on these Pinnions out of sight, and is carried upward, as it were, into another World.

This at least, my Lord, I may justly plead, that if I have not perform'd so well as I think I have, yet I have us'd my best endeavours to excel my self. One Disadvantage I have had, which is, never to have known, or seen my Lady: And to draw the Lineaments of her Mind, from the Description which I have receiv'd from others, is for a Painter to set himself at work without the living Original before him. Which the more beautiful it is, will be so much the more difficult for him to conceive; when he has only a relation given him, of such and such Features by an Acquaintance or a Friend; without the Nice Touches which give the best Resemblance, and make the Graces of the Picture. Every Artist is apt enough to flatter himself, (and I amongst the rest) that their own ocular Observations, would have discover'd more perfections, at least others, than have been deliver'd to them: Though I have receiv'd mine from the best hands, that is, from Persons who neither want a just Understanding of my Lady's Worth, nor a due Veneration for her Memory.

Doctor Donne the greatest Wit, though not the best Poet of our Nation, acknowledges, that he had never seen Mrs. Drury, whom he has made immortal in his admirable Anniversaries; I have had the same fortune; though I have not succeeded to the same Genius. However, I have follow'd his footsteps in the Design of his Panegyrick, which was to raise an Emulation in the living, to

Copy.

'Copy out the Example of the dead. And therefore it was, that I once intended to have call'd this Poem, the Pattern: And though on a second consideration, I chang'd the Title into the Name of that Illustrious Person, yet the Design continues, and Eleonora is still the Pattern of Charity, Devotion, and Humility; of the best Wife, the best Mother, and the best of Friends.

And now, my Lord, though I have endeavour'd to answer Your Commands, yet I cou'd not answer it to the World, nor to my Conscience, if I gave not Your Lordship my Testimony of being the best Husband now living: I say my Testimony only: For the praise of it, is given You by Your self. They who despise the Rules of Virtue both in their Practice and their Morals, will think this a very trivial Commendation. But I think it the peculiar happiness of the Countess of Abingdon, to have been so truly lov'd by you, while she was living, and so gratefully honour'd, after she was dead. Few there are who have either had, or cou'd have such a loss; and yet fewer who carried their Love and Constancy beyond the Grave. The exteriours of Mourning, a decent Funeral, and black Habits, are the usual stints of Common Husbands: and perhaps their Wives deserve no better than to be mourn'd with Hypocrisie, and forgot with ease. But You have distinguish'd Your self from ordinary Lovers, by a real, and lasting grief for the Deceas'd. And by endeavouring to raise for her, the most durable Monument, which is that of Verse. And so it wou'd have prov'd if the Workman had b'en equal to the Work; and Your Choice of the Artificer, as happy as Your Design. Yet, as Phidias when he had made the Statue of Minerva, cou'd not forbear to engrave his own Name, as Author of the Piece; so give me leave to hope, that

The Dedication.

that by subscribing mine to this Poem, I may live by the Goddess, and transmit my Name to Posterity by the memory of Hers. 'Tis no flattery, to assure Your Lordship, that she is remember'd in the present Age, by all who have had the Honour of her Conversation and Acquaintance. And that I have never been in any Company since the news of her death was first brought me, where they have not extoll'd her Virtues; and even spoken the same things of her in Prose, which I have done in Verse.

I therefore think my self oblig'd to thank Your Lordship for the Commission which You have given me: How I have acquitted myself of it, must be left to the Opinion of the World, in spight of any Protestation, which I can enter against the present Age, as Incompetent, or Corrupt Judges. For my Comfort they are but Englishmen, and as such, if they Think Ill of me to Day, they are inconstant enough, to Think Well of me to Morrow. And, after all, I have not much to thank my Fortune that I was born amongst them. The Good of both Sexes are so few, in England, that they stand like Exceptions against General Rule's: And though one of them has deserved a greater Commendation, than I cou'd give her, they have taken care, that I shou'd not tire my Pen, with frequent exercise on the like Subjects; that Praises, like Taxes, shou'd be appropriated; and left almost as Individual as the Person. They say my Talent is Satyre; if it be so, 'tis a Fruitful Age; and there is an extraordinary Crop to gather. But a single hand is insufficient for such a Harvest: They have sown the Dragons Teeth themselves; and 'tis but just they shou'd reap each other in Lampoons. You, my Lord, who have the Character of Honour, though 'tis not my Happiness to know

You,

The Dedication.

You, may stand aside, with the small Remainders of the English Nobility, truly such, and unburt your selves, beholde the mad Combat. If I have pleas'd You, and some few others, I have obtain'd my end. You see, I have disabled my self, like an ~~E~~ lefted Speaker of the House; yet like him I have undertaken the Charge; and find the Burden sufficiently recompenc'd by the Honour. Be pleas'd to accept of these my Unworthy Labours; this Paper Monument; and let her Pious Memory, which I am sure is Sacred to You, not only plead the Pardon of my many Faults but gain me Your Protection, which is ambitiously sought by,

MY L O R D,

Your Lordship's
Most Obedient Servant,

John Dryden.

Eleonora: A PANEGYRICAL POEM,

Dedicated to the

MEMORY OF THE Late Countess of ABINGDON.

As, when some Great and Gracious Monarch dies,
Soft whispers, first, and mournful Murmurs rise
Among the sad Attendants; then, the sound
Soon gathers voice, and spreads the news around,
Through Town and Country, till the dreadful blast
Is blown to distant Colonies at last;

Who, then perhaps, were off'ring Vows in vain,
For his long life, and for his happy Reign :
So slowly, by degrees, unwilling Fame
Did Matchless *Eleonora's* fate proclaim,
Till publick as the loss, the news became.

The Nation felt it, in th' extremest parts ;
With eyes o'reflowing, and with bleeding hearts :
But most the poor, whom daily she supply'd,
Beginning to be such, but when she dy'd.
For, while she liv'd, they slept in peace, by night ;
Secure of bread, as of returning light ;
And, with such firm dependance on the Day,
That need grew pamper'd, and forgot to pray.
So sure the Dole, so ready at their call,
They stood prepar'd to see the Manna fall.

Such Multitudes she fed, she cloath'd, she nurst,

That

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That she, her self, might fear her wanting first,
Of her Five Talents, other five she made;
Heav'n, that had largely giv' it, was largely pay'd:
And, in few lives, in wondrous few, we find
A Fortunat, better fitted to the Mind.
Nor did her Alms from Orientation fall,
Or proud desire of Praise; the Soul gave all:
Unbrib'd it gave; or, if a bribe appear,
No less than Heav'n, to heap huge treasures, ther.

Wane pass'd for Merit, at her open door,
Heav'n saw, he safely might increase his Poor.
And trust their Sustenance with her so well,
As not to be at charge of Miracle.
None cou'd be needy, whom she saw, or knew;
All, in the Companie of her Spirit, she drew:
He who cou'd touch her Garment, was as sure,
As the first Christians of th' Apostles cure.

The distant heard, by Fame, her pious deeds ;
And laid her up, for their extremest needs ;
A future Cordial, for a fainting Mind ;
For, what was ne're refus'd, all hop'd to find ;
Each in his turn : The Rich might freely come,
As to a Friend ; but to the Poor, 'twas Home.
As to some Holy House th' Afflicted came ; }
The Hunger-starv'd, the Naked, and the Lame ; }
Want and Diseases fled before her Name. }
For zeal like hers, her Servants were too slow ; }
She was the first where need requir'd, to go ; }
Her self the Foundress, and Attendant too. }

Sure she had Guests sometimes to entertain,
Guests in disguise, of her Great Master's Train :
Her Lord himself might come, for ought we know ;
Since in a Servant's form he liv'd below.

Beneath

Beneath her Roof, he might be pleas'd to stay :
Or some benighted Angel, in his way
Might ease his Wings ; and seeing Heav'n appear
In its best work of Mercy, think it there,
Where all the deeds of Charity and Love
Were in as constant Method, as above :
All carry'd on ; all of a piece with theirs ; }
As free her Alms, as diligent her cares ; }
As loud her Praises, and as warm her Pray'rs. }

Yet was she not profuse ; but fear'd to waste,
And wisely manag'd, that the stock might last ;
That all might be supply'd ; and she not grieve
When Crouds appear'd, she had not to relieve.
Which to prevent, she still increas'd her store ;
Laid up, and spar'd, that she might give the more :
So Pharaoh, or some Greater King than he,
Provided for the sev'nth Necessity :

*Of her poor
dear Ma-
nagement.*

Taught from above, his Magazines to frame,
That Famine was prevented ere it came.
Thus Heav'n, though All-sufficient, shows a drift
In his Oeconomy; and bounds his gift:
Creating for our Day, one single Light;
And his Reflection too supplies the Night.
Perhaps a thousand other Worlds, that lie
Remote from us, and latent in the Sky,
Are lighten'd by his Beams, and kindly nurst,
Of which our Earthly Dunghil is the worst.

Now, as all Virtues keep the middle line,
Yet somewhat incline to one extreme incline,
Such was her Soul, abhorring Avarice,
Bounteous, but, labouring bounteous to a Vice:
Had she given more, as had Profusion been,
And turn'd the excess of Goodness, into Sin.

of her
mility.

These Vertues rais'd her Fabrick to the Sky ;
For that which is next Heav'n, is Charity. sq 2 30
But, as high Turrets, for their Ay'ry steep
Require Foundations, in proportion deep : xxviij
And lofty Cedars, as far, upward shoot,
As to the neather Heav'ns they drive the root ;
So low did her secur Foundation lye ; gj
She was not Humble; but Humility, h b d
Scarcely she knew that she was great, or fair, i j
Or wise, beyond what other Women are, k l
Or, which is better, knew ; but never durst compare. S
For to be conscious of what all admire, l v s h
And not be vain, advanced Virtue higher ; j o m
But still she found, or rather thought she found, n p
Her own worth wanting, wishes to abound ; o r w
Ascrib'd above their due to every one, q s d
Unjust, and scanty to her self alone. r v n

Such

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Such her Devotion was, as might give rules
Of Speculation, to disputing Schools ;
And teach us equally the Scales to hold
Betwixt the two Extremes of hot and cold,
That pious heat may mod'rately prevail,
And we be warm'd, but not be scorch'd with zeal.
Business might shorten, not disturb her Pray'r ;
Heav'n had the best, if not the greater share.
An Active life, long Oraisons forbids ;
Yet still she pray'd, for still she pray'd by deeds.

Her ev'ry day was Sabbath : Only free
From hours of Pray'r, for hours of Charity.
Such as the Jews from servile toil releas'd ;
Where works of Mercy were a part of rest :
Such as blest Angels exercise above,
Vary'd with Sacred Hymns, and Acts of Love ;

Such

Such Sabbaths as that one she now enjoys;
 Ev'n that perpetual one, which she employs,
 (For such vicissitudes in Heav'n there are)
 In Praise alternate, and alternate Pray'r.

All this she practis'd here; that when she sprung
 Amidst the Quires, at the first sight she sung!
 Sung, and was sung her self, in Angels Lays;
 For praising her, they did her Maker praise.
 All Offices of Heav'n so well she knew,
 Before she came, that nothing there was new.
 And she was so familiarly receiv'd,
 As one returning, not as one arriv'd.

Muse, down again precipitate thy flight, Of her
times Ver
times.
 For how can Mortal Eyes sustain Immortal Light!
 But as the Sun in Water we can bear,
 Yet not the Sun, but his Reflection there,

So let us view her here, in what she was,
 And take her Image, in this watry Glass:
 Yet look not ev'ry Lineament to see,
 Some will be cast in shades; and some will be
 So lamely drawn, you scarcely know, 'tis she.
 For where such various Vertues we recite,
 'Tis like the Milky-Way, all over bright,
 But sown so thick with Stars, 'tis undistinguish'd
 Light.

Her Virtue, not her Vertues let us call,
 For one Heroick comprehends 'em all:
 One, as a Constellation is but one;
 Though 'tis a Train of Stars, that, rolling on,
 Rise in their turn, and in the Zodiack run.
 Ever in Motion; now 'tis Faith ascends,
 Now Hope, now Charity, that upward tends,
 And downvwards vvith diffusive Good, descends.

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As in Perfumes compos'd with Art and Cost,
'Tis hard to say what Scent is uppermost ;
Nor this part Musk or Civet can we call,
Or Amber, but a rich Result of all ;
So, she was all a Sweet ; whose ev'ry part,
In due proportion mix'd, proclaim'd the Maker's Art.
No single Virtue we cou'd most commend ;
Whether the Wife, the Mother, or the Friend ;
For she was all, in that supreme degree,
That, as no one prevail'd, so all was she.
The sev'ral parts lay hidden in the Piece ;
Th' Occasion but exerted that, or this.

A Wife as tender, and as true withall,
As the first Woman was, before her fall :
Made for the Man, of whom she was a part ;
Made, to attract his Eyes, and keep his Heart.

Of ber
jugal V
mes.

A second Eve, but by no Crime accurst;
As beauteous, not as brittle as the first.
Had she been first, still Paradise had bin,
And Death had found no entrance by her sin.
So she not only had preserv'd from ill
Her Sex and ours, but liv'd their Pattern still.

Love and Obedience to her Lord she bore,
She much obey'd him, but she lov'd him more.
Not aw'd to Duty by superior sway,
But taught by his Indulgence to obey.
Thus we love God as Author of our good,
So Subjects love just Kings, or so they shou'd.
Nor was it with Ingratitude return'd,
In equal Fires the blissful Couple burn'd.
One Joy posses'd 'em both, and in one Grief they
His Passion still improv'd: he lov'd so fast
As if he fear'd each day wou'd be her last.

Too true a Prophet to foresee the Fate
 That shou'd so soon divide their happy State :
 When he to Heav'n entirely must restore
 That Love, that Heart, where he went halves before.
 Yet as the Soul is all in ev'ry part,
 So God and He, might each have all her Heart.

So had her Children too ; for Charity
 Was not more fruitful, or more kind than she :
 Each under other by degrees they grew ;
 A goodly Perspective of distant view ;
Anchises look'd not with so pleas'd a Face
 In numb'ring o'er his future *Roman* Race,
 And Marshalling the Heroes of his name
 As, in their Order, next to light they came ;
 Nor *Cybele* with half so kind an Eye,
 Survey'd her Sons and Daughters of the Skies.

Of her
to her C
dren.

Proud, shall I say, of her immortal Fruit,
As far as Pride with Heav'nenly Minds may suit.

*are of
Eds.*

Her pious love excell'd to all she bore ;
New Objects only multiply'd it more.
And as the Chosen found the perly Grain
As much as ev'ry Vessel cou'd contain ;
As in the Blissfull Vision each shall share,
As much of Glory, as his Soul can bear ;
So did she love, and so dispence her Care. }
Her eldest thus, by consequence, was best ;
As longer cultivated than the rest :
The Babe had all that Infant care beguiles,
And early knew his Mother in her smiles :
But when dilated Organs let in day
To the young Soul, and gave it room to play,
At his first aptness, the Maternal Love
Those Rudiments of Reason did improve :

[45]

The tender Age was pliant to command ;
Like Wax it yielded to the forming hand :
True to th' Artificer, the labour'd Mind
With ease was pious, generous, just and kind ;
Soft for Impression from the first, prepar'd,
Till Virtue, with long exercise, grew hard ;
With ev'ry Act confirm'd ; and made, at last
So durable, as not to be effac'd,
It turn'd to Habit ; and, from Vices free,
Goodness resolv'd into Necessity.

Thus fix'd she Virtue's Image, that's her own,
Till the whole Mother in the Children shone ;
For that was their Perfection : she was such,
They never cou'd express her Mind too much.
So unexhausted her Perfections were,
That, for more Children, she had more to spare :

For Souls unborn, whom her untimely death
 Depriv'd of Bodies, and of mortal breath:
 And (cou'd they take th' Impressions of her Mind)
 Enough still left to sanctifie her Kind.

Then wonder not to see this Soul extend
 The bounds, and seek some other self, a Friend:
 As swelling Seas to gentle Rivers glide,
 To seek repose, and empty out the Tyde;
 So this full Soul, in narrow limits pent,
 Unable to contain her, sought a vent,
 To issue out, and in some friendly breast
 Discharge her Treasures, and securely rest.
 T' unbosom all the secrets of her Heart,
 Take good advice, but better to impart:
 For 'tis the bliss of Friendship's holy state
 To mix their Minds, and to communicate;
 Though Bodies cannot, Souls can penetrate.

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Fixt to her choice, inviolably true,
And wisely chusing, for she chose but few.
Some she must have; but in no one cou'd find
A Tally fitted for so large a Mind.

The Souls of Friends, like Kings in Progress are;
Still in their own, though from the Palace far:
Thus her Friend's Heart her Country Dwelling was,
A sweet Retirement to a courser place:
Where Pomp and Ceremonies enter'd not;
Where Greatness was shut out, and Bus'ness well for-
got.

This is th' imperfect draught; but short as far
As the true height and bigness of a Star
Exceeds the Measures of th' Astronomer.
She shines above we know, but in what place,
How near the Throne, and Heav'n's Imperial Face,

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By our weak Opticks is but vainly guess'd,
Distance and Altitude conceal the rest.

Tho all these rare Endowments of the Mind

Were in a narrow space of life confin'd;

The Figure was with full Perfection crown'd;

Though not so large an Orb, as truly round.

As when in glory, through the publick place,

The Spoils of conquer'd Nations were to pass,

And but one Day for Triumph was allow'd,

The Consul was constrain'd his Pomp to crowd;

And so the swift Procession hurry'd on,

That all, though not distinctly, might be shown;

So, in the straiten'd bounds of life confin'd,

She gave but glimpses of her glorious Mind:

And multitudes of Vertues pass'd along;

Each pressing foremost in the mighty throng;

Ambitious

Ambitious to be seen, and then make room,
For greater Multitudes that were to come.

Yet unemploy'd no Minute slip't away ;
Moments were precious in so short a stay.
The haste of Heav'n to have her was so great,
That some were single Acts, though each compleat, }
But ev'ry Act stood ready to repeat. }

Her fellow Saints with busie care, will look
For her blast Name, in Fate's eternal Book ;
And, pleas'd to be outdone, with joy will see
Numberless Virtues, endless Charity ;
But more with wonder at so short an Act,
To find a Blank beyond the third th Page ;
And with a pious fear begin to doubt
The Piect imperfect, and the rest torn out.

But 'twas her Saviour's time; and, cou'd there be
A Copy near th' Original, 'twas she.

As precious Gums are not for lasting fire,
They but perfume the Temple, and expire,
So was she soon exhal'd, and vanish'd hence;
A short sweet Odour, of a vast expence.
She vanish'd, we can scarcely say she dy'd;
For but a Now, did Heav'n and Earth divide:
She pass'd serenely with a single breath,
This Moment perfect health, the next was death.
One sigh, did her eternal Bliss assure,
So little Penance needs, when Souls are almost pure.
As gentle Dreams our waking Thoughts pursue,
Or, one Dream pass'd, we slide into a new;
(So close they follow, such wild Order keep,)
We think our selves awake, and are asleep:

So softly death succeeded life, in her;
She did but dream of Heav'n, and she was there.

No Pains she suffer'd, nor expir'd with Noise,
Her Soul was whisper'd out, with God's still Voice:
As an old Friend is beckon'd to a Feast,
And treated like a long familiar Guest;
He took her as he found; but found her so
As one in hourly readiness to go. Her preparedness to die.
Ev'n on that day, in all her Trim prepar'd;
As early notice she from Heav'n had heard,
And some descending Courtier, from above
Had giv'n her timely warning to remove:
Or counsell'd her to dres the nuptial Room;
For on that Night the Bridegroom was to come.
He kept his hour, and found her where she lay
Cloath'd all in white, the Liy'ry of the Day. She dy'd on Whitunday night.

Scarce had she finis'd, in thought, or word, or act,
Unless Omissions were to pass for fact:
That hardly Death a Consequence cou'd draw,
To make her liable to Nature's Law.
And that she dy'd, we only have to show,
The mortal part of her she left below,
The rest (so smooth, so suddenly she went)
Look'd like Translation, through the Firmament,
Or like the fiery Carr, on the third Errand sent.

Apostrophe
her Soul.

O happy Soul! if thou canst view from high,
Where thou art all Intelligence, all Eye,
If looking up to God, or down to us,
Thou find it, that may way be pervious,
Survey the ruins of thy House, and see
Thy widow'd, and thy Orphan Family;
Look on thy tender Pledges left behind;
And, if thou canst a vacant Minute find

From Heav'nly Joys, that Interval afford
To thy sad Children, and thy mourning Lord,
See how they grieve, mistaken in their love,
And shed a beam of Comfort from above;
Give 'em, as much as mortal Eyes can bear,
A transient view of thy full glories there,
That they with mod'rate sorrow may sustain
And mollifie their Losses, in thy Gain.
Or else divide the grief, for such thou wert,
That shou'd not all Relations bear a part,
It were enough to break a single heart.

Let this suffice: Nor thou, great Saint, refuse
This humble Tribute of no vulgar Muse:
Who, not by Cares, or Wants, or Age deprest,
Stems a wild Deluge with a dauntless breast:
And dares to sing thy Praises, in a Clime
Where Vice triumphs, and Vertue is a Crime.

Where

Where ev'n to day the Picture of thy Mind
Is Satyr on the most of Human Kind:
Take it, while yet 'tis Praise; before my rage
Unsafely just, break loose on this bad Age;
So bad, that thou thy self had'st no defence,
From Vice, but barely by departing hence.

Be what, and where thou art: To wish thy place
Were in the best, Presumption, more than grace.
Thy Reliques (such thy Works of Mercy are)
Have, in this Poem, been my holy care.
As Earth thy Body keeps, thy Soul the Sky,
So shall this Verse preserve thy Memory;
For thou shalt make it live, because it sings of thee.

F I N I S.